



The Effects of Instruction Enhanced by Video/Photo Blogs and Wikis on Learning the Distinctions of the Spanish Preterite and Imperfect

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Abstract: *This study investigated the differences in levels of achievement when learning the preterite and imperfect aspects in Spanish, at the recognition and production levels, between students who used instruction with video/photo blogs and wikis, compared to those who used instruction with traditional text-based technologies. Results revealed that there were no significant differences at the production level between the students who used video/photo blog and wiki technologies vs. those who used traditional technologies. However, significant differences were found at the recognition level for the group that used video/photo blogs and wikis when compared with those who used traditional technologies. General mean results revealed that the groups using video/photo blogs and wikis outperformed those who used traditional technologies.*

Key words: *Spanish, blogs and wikis, past tense, preterite and imperfect aspects, videos and photos*

Introduction

The teaching and learning of the preterite and imperfect aspect is a challenge for language instructors and English-speaking learners of Spanish, because English simple past does not signal aspect in the same way as Spanish does (Frantzen, 1995). Aspectual distinctions in Spanish, as well as other romance languages, are explicitly marked on inflectional morphology. On the other hand, English speakers have a basic conceptual knowledge of aspectual distinctions, represented by the past progressive and the simple past tense, and potentially can transfer that conceptual understanding when learning the preterite and imperfect aspects in Spanish (Salaberry & Ayoun, 2005). English speakers have to learn various morphological forms and become aware of their discourse functions (background vs. foreground). Also, learners of Spanish may have to deal with unfamiliar terms used in explicit textbook grammar explanations. In addition, the amount of input (especially narrative discourse) is scarce in a classroom setting and students do not have sufficient

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exposure to the preterite and imperfect aspect distinctions (Blyth, 2005). Consequently, instructors need to find effective ways to present these grammar structures at an early stage of learning by exposing the learners to contexts and environments that help them to understand these distinctions.

The emergence of free online tools and services, such as blogs and wikis, which can embed other tools such as YouTube videos or RSS feeds, could enrich the language learning process (Godwin-Jones, 2003, 2007), including the acquisition of the preterite and imperfect aspects in Spanish by providing a rich virtual environment (text and audiovisuals) that facilitates the learning of this grammar structure. Research on the effects of blogs and wikis on L2 learning and teaching is still at its embryonic stage, but there seems to be a significant number of projects in progress. However, few have looked at the acquisition of the preterite and imperfect using these technologies. The purpose of this study is to explore the effects of instruction that uses video/photo blogs and wikis as one solution to the teaching and learning of a problematic grammatical concept for English-speaking learners of Spanish: the selection of appropriate aspect when recognizing and producing written phrases containing past tense verbs.

Literature Review

The Difference Between Aspect and Tense

Traditionally, the preterite and imperfect have been referred to as “tenses” by the language textbooks. However, Comrie (1976) established a more systematic distinction between “tense” and “aspect,” hence the use of the term “aspect” in this research study:

Tense relates the time of the situation referred to to some other time, usually to the moment of speaking. In this sense, the most common tenses in most languages are present, past and future ... aspect refers to the internal constituency of a situation. ... the difference

between *he was reading* and *he read*, is not one of tense, since in both cases we have absolute past tense. (p. 3)

Comrie's (1976) definition and explanation are framed in terms of English (past progressive vs. simple past). However, the distinction of aspect can be difficult to acquire by English-speaking learners of Spanish, especially when they deal with the simple past, because English has one simple past whereas Spanish has two: the preterite and imperfect. The English simple past is marked only for time; it does not show aspect. In the English utterance *he studied*, the meaning could be *estudió* or *estudiaba* depending on the context in which the verb is used. Here is an example: *He studied the lesson yesterday* and *He studied the lesson whenever he had the chance*.

The first requires the preterite *estudió*, because it is seen as a completed action, whereas the second one requires the imperfect *estudiaba*, because it is shown as an ongoing action in the past. It should be noted that certain English forms, such as the progressive *he was studying* and *he used to study*, are generally translated into the Spanish imperfect (Ayllon, Smith, & Morillo, 1996).

The Discourse Hypothesis as the Theoretical Framework of Analysis

Research on the acquisition of the preterite and imperfect aspects has been performed from the perspectives of two major hypotheses: the aspect hypothesis and the discourse hypothesis. The aspect hypothesis maintains that the distribution of interlanguage verbal morphology is determined by lexical aspectual class. This hypothesis is based on a theory of lexical inherent aspect that refers to categories such as states (e.g., *seem*, *know*, *need*, *want*, and *be*), activities (e.g., *sleep*, *snow*, *play*, and *rain*), accomplishments (e.g., *build a house*, *paint a painting*), and achievements (e.g., *arrive*, *leave*, *notice*, and *recognize*) (Vendler, 1967). On the other hand, the discourse hypothesis maintains

that the distribution of interlanguage verbal morphology is determined by narrative structure. Narrative discourse is composed of the foreground, which relates to the skeletal structure of the discourse, and the background, which provides supportive material that elaborates or evaluates the events in the skeletal structure (Hopper, 1979).

From the aspect hypothesis perspective, the preterite is bounded (for completed action), whereas the imperfect is unbounded (without specifying a beginning and an end) (Potowski, 2005). In that sense, telic verbs such as achievement (e.g., *arrive, leave, notice, and recognize*) or accomplishments (e.g., *build a house, paint a painting*) would more likely take the preterite aspect, whereas dynamic verbs such as states (e.g., *seem, know, need, want, and be*) would take the imperfect aspect (Liskin-Gasparro, 2000; López-Ortega, 2000).

With regard to the sequential development of past morphology, there are two overlapping developmental patterns that have been widely cited in L2 Spanish acquisition. In the first pattern an initial-stage learner uses only present tense forms for past contexts. At a later stage of the same pattern, the preterite emerges in achievements and accomplishments, eventually extending to activities and states.

The imperfect appears after the preterite in state and activity predicates, and then extends to accomplishments and achievements (Anderson, 1991; Anderson & Shirai, 1996; Bardovi-Harlig, 2000). In the second developmental pattern the classroom L2 learner of Spanish does not use past tense marking at stage 0. At stage 1 the learner only uses the preterite to mark past tense. The imperfect appears at stage 2 with stative verbs. At stage 3, the imperfect extends to atelic and telic events. At stage 4, all verbs may be marked with imperfective or preterite (Salaberry, 2000b, p. 172). The preterite seems to be the preferred form to mark past tense (default marker of past) by the lower level learner (typically second or third semester U.S. university level) to express past time regardless of the lexical

aspect of the verb (Salaberry, 1999, 2000b). However, a later study revealed that the preterite was the preferred form in fictional narratives, whereas the imperfect was used more often in personal narratives (Salaberry, 2003).

From the discourse hypothesis perspective, the preterite marks the foreground information and the imperfect marks the background information (López-Ortega, 2000). The preterite introduces a new reference in time into the discourse model with each event (backbone or plotline of the story), whereas the imperfect does not introduce new times into the discourse and therefore does not move the narrative forward (Blyth, 1997; Westfall & Forester, 1996). The preterite emphasizes information action (high focus), whereas the imperfect de-emphasizes information situation (description) (Ozete, 1998).

These hypotheses have not only been tested and supported individually, but also some studies suggest that both hypotheses are necessary to account for the distribution of tense-aspect morphology in second language acquisition (SLA) (Bardovi-Harlig, 1998; López-Ortega, 2000). However, the purpose of this research study is to explore the effects of learning and teaching the preterite and imperfect aspects, from the perspective of the discourse hypothesis (or narrative structure), in an instructional environment using video/photo blogs and wikis.

Definition of Terms

Instruction That Uses Video/Photo Blogs and Wikis (Treatment) vs.

Instruction That Uses Traditional Text-Based Technologies (Control)

Instruction that uses video/photo blogs and wikis refers to the combination of traditional classroom instruction used with these technologies. Blogs and wikis are a form of computer-mediated communication that allows interaction, beyond the traditional face-to-face classroom, among participants that are distributed across time and distance

(Godwin-Jones, 2003). On the other hand, the term “instruction that uses traditional text-based technologies” refers to traditional classroom instruction in combination with the two most common tools students use to write and submit their papers and essays: paper and pencil or word processing software. The latter term is used only for this particular study and is not intended to exclude other traditional technologies or make a generalization about them.

Recognition vs. Production

“Recognition level” refers to the participants’ skill of reading and recognizing the distinction between the preterite and imperfect aspects. In this study, the participants were asked to read three texts (pre- and posttests) and select the correct verbs, provided in parentheses, according to the context (see example in Appendix A). On the other hand, “production level” refers to the participants’ writing skills using the preterite and imperfect. They were asked to complete an open-ended task (pre- and posttest) in which they had to write sentences using the preterite and imperfect (see Appendix B). It should be noted that for all tests (with the exception of test 2 of the recognition level), students were shown short YouTube video clips to help them understand the context of each story. The terms “recognition” and “production” are used only for the purposes of this research study.

Blogs

A blog is a web application in which users can post text, photos, or videos. Typically, postings are presented in reverse chronological order and are marked with date and time stamps. Blogs are often interlinked with other media such as voice messaging from a cell phone (Godwin-Jones, 2003; Thorne & Payne, 2005). Bloggers can also incorporate audio files, photos, and videos (Johnson, 2004; McIntosh, 2005). Blogs are usually aimed at a broader audience than the blogger’s own friends and family

(McIntosh, 2005), or an unknown mass of “netizens” (Williams & Jacobs, 2004). In addition, learners can publish text and graphics to the web without needing to have sophisticated technical knowledge (Hufaker, 2005). Blogs can be multidisciplinary and can be applied to a variety of academic contexts (Godwin-Jones, 2003). They can be used as electronic portfolios, personal journals (or publications), bulletin boards, as standard web pages, or as part of international language exchanges (Campbell, 2003; Downes, 2004; Ducate & Lomicka, 2005; Godwin-Jones, 2003). Blogs allow learners to criticize, reflect, question, and react to the content of the blog (Downes, 2004).

Some studies have supported the idea that blogs can facilitate language teaching and learning. Blogs can transform writers and readers from passive to participatory and increase their confidence (Blood, 2000). Blogs can also foster extensive practice, learning motivation, authorship, and development of learning strategies (Sun, 2009). Students can write academic and nonacademic discourse features and can improve their spelling and verbal conjugations (Thorne, Bensinger, Reinhardt, & Webber, 2005). Blogs can help improve the development of rhetorical strategies (Bloch, 2007), cultural knowledge, and reading comprehension (Ducate & Lomicka, 2005).

Wikis

Whereas blogs are typically used as personal journals, wikis are commonly used for collaborative projects. Leuf and Cunningham (2001) define the term “wiki” as “a freely expandable collection of interlinked Web pages, a hypertext system for storing and modifying information—a database, where each page is easily edited by any user with a forms-capable Web browser client” (p. 14). As time passes, multiple authors have the freedom to edit and update a wiki page, and gradually the content becomes a representation of the shared contributions. Entries are in a constant state of flux. Creators may

leave gaps so that somebody else will fill them in (Lamb, 2004). New versions or contributions can always be tracked and monitored for further assessment or be restored to a previous version (Aronsson, 2002; Augar, Raitman, & Zhou, 2004; Sze, 2008; Thorne & Payne, 2005). Wikis are suitable for online projects because they use a simple set of formatting commands; there is no need to know HTML language (Bryant, 2006; Dobeli, 2005; Godwin-Jones, 2003). One of the best-known wikis is the encyclopedia *Wikipedia*.

Research about wikis has been mostly descriptive and exploratory in nature. Some of these reports state that wikis are a valuable tool for a community of practice to engage in the process of shared construction of knowledge across the Internet (Da Lio, Fabroni, & Leo, 2005). They can be effective when evaluating each student's contribution to a collaborative learning project (Trentin, 2008). Students have a sense of ownership and authority and can collaborate in a relaxed environment (Raitman, Augar, & Zhou, 2005). Wikis can be used by nontechnical experts (children) to collaboratively create complex web-based stories (Desilets, Paquet, & Vinson, 2005).

Despite the newness of the technology, evidence that wikis promote successful collaborative writing in L2 projects is accumulating. Students can correct and learn both from their own and their classmates' form errors while learning about L2 culture (Kessler, 2009). Wikis can foster the development of writing skills and revision behavior (Arnold, Ducate, & Kost, 2009). They can positively affect students' L2 writing proficiency (Pae, 2007). Wikis can also be useful to evaluate students' web-based activities (Kovacic, Bubas, & Zlatovic, 2007). Wikis support collective language production, network structure, and shared spaces in L2 (Lund, 2008). There are some projects currently underway related to intercultural competence as well as academic and collaborative writing in the foreign language classroom (Bradley, 2009; Oskoz & Elola, 2010, in press; Spicher, 2009).

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study.

1. Are there significant differences in achievement when learning the Spanish preterite and imperfect, at the production level, between students who use instruction with video/photo blogs and wikis vs. those who use instruction with traditional text-based technologies after controlling for preintervention performance?
2. Are there significant differences in achievement when learning the Spanish preterite and imperfect, at the recognition level, between students who use instruction with video/photo blogs and wikis vs. those who use instruction with traditional text-based technologies after controlling for preintervention performance?

Method

Participants

The initial study sample consisted of 75 participants. They were enrolled in five sections of Elementary Spanish II, the equivalent of the second semester of college-level Spanish, during the Spring semester 2009. Participants were undergraduate students in a midwestern public university. Of the 75 participants, 33 (44%) were male and 42 (56%) were female. Seventy-four (98.6%) were native speakers of English, and one (1.3%) was a Portuguese and English speaker. The majority of students, 65 (89%), reported taking this class to complete a college language requirement, 6 (8.2%) for personal interests, 1 (1.4%) participant was majoring in Spanish, and 1 (1.4%) was a Spanish minor. Thirty-four (38%) reported having studied the past tense in previous courses, such as in high school, whereas 37 (52.1%) reported not having studied the past tense. They were majoring in various disciplines such as English, Psychology, History, and Computer Science. Based on the researcher's observation, most students' proficiency would likely exhibit characteristics described as novice-high or intermediate-low level on the ACTFL Proficiency

Guidelines—Writing (revised 2001). Writers at this level can write sentences “mostly in present time with occasional and often incorrect use of past or future time” (p. 5). As a caveat, these participants were not given an ACTFL writing test.

Although the initial number of participants was 75, some participants dropped out of the class during the semester. Others either did not take the pre- or posttests or simply decided not to participate in the study. Therefore, $N = 64$ for participants who completed the recognition component. However, out of those 64 participants, only 43 participants completed the production component or essays. (Some participants reported to the undergraduate research assistant that it is more difficult to elaborate on an essay in a foreign language than it is to read and select the correct verbs while reading a story. This might explain the discrepancy between the number of participants in the production and recognition components.)

Materials

Demographic Survey

In addition to the typical demographic questions related to gender, native language, and reason for taking the class, two additional questions were asked in order to determine participants' previous exposure to the past tense and participants' preference for working in groups: *Have you studied the past tense in Spanish before? Do you prefer to work alone or in groups?*

Pre- and Posttests (Recognition Component)

A total of three pretests and three posttests were given for the recognition component, with the pre- and posttests being identical. Test 1 was originally used in studies conducted by Salaberry (1999, 2000a, 2003). The coefficient of reliability of the test was very high (Cronbach's alpha .996). This test describes a narrative from the movie segment of *Modern Times* by Charles Chaplin.

Also, to facilitate the students' understanding of the chronology of the events, two YouTube video clips, *Modern times 4 of 9* and *Modern times 5 of 9 (Alone and Hungry)*, were shown once.

Test 2 was previously used in studies reported by Liskin-Gasparro (2000) and Salaberry (2003). The coefficient of reliability of this test was very high (Cronbach's alpha .992). This test describes a fictional personal narrative. The participants did not see any video clip; however, an English translation of the test was included to help the participants understand the sequence of events.

Test 3 was adapted by the researcher from an original student wiki posting from a previous class in which the researcher piloted some of the instructional activities for this research project (see Appendix A). The content validity of this test was assessed following guidelines suggested by Rubio, Berg-Weger, Tebb, and Rauch (2003). The three instructors in the control group were asked to rate each item on the test for clarity and as to how well the items represented the data being sought to answer research question 2. The instructors rated each item on a four-point scale and were also asked to provide comments on which items should be modified or deleted. The results showed an interrater agreement of 1.0 (100%) for representativeness and clarity, respectively. In addition, the instructors commented that they did not have any major problem with the items. It should be noted that the researcher also rated the items of this test, reaching 100% agreement with the instructors in the control group. The results suggest that there was a consistency among all instructors in this study. In order to help the students understand the sequence of events, a YouTube video about “*Los Tres Osos*” was shown once.

Pre- and Posttest (Production Component)

Test 4 was for the production component. The participants had to write a short essay

about what happened in the YouTube video segment *Fantasia "The sorcerer's apprentice"* by Walt Disney. This video contains rich visual animations and repetitive actions that allow the participants to describe various main events as well as notice the background events or details (Bardovi-Harlig, 2005; Lafford, 1996). In order to facilitate the organization process of their essay, the test had a two-column table. On the left side, participants could write the main events of the story and on the right side, the participants could write the descriptions or background actions. After filling in the two columns, participants had to use the information from both columns to write their narrative (see Appendix B).

Preterite and Imperfect Rubric

This instrument was used by the researcher and the instructors in the control group (interraters) to grade the pre- and posttests of the production component of this study. This instrument was used and validated by three Spanish native speakers and one nonnative speaker in a previous study (Castaneda, 2007). One of them was working on her doctoral degree in foreign language education and the others three were finishing their masters' degree in Spanish.

Procedure

This study took place during 13 weeks in Spring 2009 with complete Institutional Review Board compliance and approval. The pre- and posttests were administered by the researcher's undergraduate assistant (URA), who replaced student participants' names with a code to protect their anonymity.

The language department where the study was conducted has a standardized language instruction program in which instructors are supplied with training, syllabi, tests, and grading criteria guidelines. The book used for this level was *Claro que si!* (Caycedo, Rusch, & Domínguez, 2008). This textbook went along with the *QUIA*

electronic workbook, which was housed by the course management system eduspace.com. In addition to the listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, students gained knowledge of Hispanic cultures in order to communicate, compare, and make connections with native speakers. The primary goal of the course was to help students to further develop their ability to understand native spoken and written Spanish, and to effectively communicate messages using vocabulary related to home, foods, sports, and health. As for grammatical structures, the students were expected to describe and narrate basic ideas in the past (preterite and imperfect) and the present subjunctive. Four of the five chapters covered during this semester dealt with the past and one with the subjunctive. The sequence of instruction in the textbook and syllabi was to present the preterite first, then the imperfect, and then to focus on the distinction between preterite and imperfect.

Classes met from Monday to Thursday for 50 minutes each day. Students in all groups were expected to submit their homework via the *QUIA* online workbook. In this platform, the practice exercises related to the preterite and imperfect aspects included listening comprehension activities, fill in the blanks, answer to questions using complete sentences, and a brief essay section (two to four sentences) about what the students did during the weekend. None of the exercises in this workbook elicited a short or long written narrative. Written narratives were submitted using a word processing program (or handwritten in pencil) by the control group, whereas for the treatment group, students were required to submit their narrative work via a blog (group A) or a wiki (group B). It should be noted that students' narratives could be read by anyone on the web; however, due to the academic purpose and nature of the activity, students were instructed to restrict access only to the instructor and other classmates to comment, add, or delete content (see Figures 1 and 2 for examples of students' postings). The writing tasks in the

FIGURE 1

Blog

Saturday, April 11, 2009

El Tres Cerditos y El Lobo



El primer cerdito construyo' su casa de paja. Bailo' y toco' la flauta. Estaba feliz. Era gordo y llevaba un sombrero, una corbata amarilla, y guantes blancos. Su casa tenia una bienvenida, muchos flores, y una silla fue

El segundo cerdito construyo' su casa de madera rapidamente porque quiso' tomar su violin. Llevaba guantes blancos, una camisa azul, y un sombrero azul.

El tercero cerdito construyo' su casa de ladrillo. Llevaba un sombrero blanco, pantalones azules, y se parecia determinado para mantener el lobo fuera de su casa.

El primer cerdito visito' la casa del segundo cerdito y tocaron musica junta. Los dos cerditos fueron a la casa del cerdito tercero. El tercero cerdito siguia trabajar. El tercero cerdito dijeron trabajar es importante para mantener el lobo fuera de sus casas. Los cerditos reieron, bailaron, y dejaron la casa del cerdito tercero.

treatment and control group were supplementary to normal classroom instruction. It should also be noted that the *QUIA* platform had an online journal feature but it was not used. Also, this was the first semester using *QUIA* on this campus and instructors were not familiar with it.

Two sections acted as the treatment group and were taught by the researcher. One group was assigned to work with the video/photo blog and the other with the video/photo wiki. The decision whether each group used a blog or a wiki was based on the literature that states that blogs are mostly used as personal journals (Bloch, 2007; Downes, 2004; Ducate & Lomicka, 2005; Thorne & Payne, 2005), whereas wikis are used for collaborative work (Aronsson, 2002; Bryant, 2006; Dobeli, 2005; Godwin-Jones, 2003; Sze, 2008). Based on a demographic survey question, Group A was

assigned to use blogs because they had the highest percentage of participants who preferred to work individually, whereas Group B had the highest percentage of participants who preferred to work in groups; therefore, they were assigned to use wikis.

Three sections served as the control group in addition to the two treatment groups, each taught by an instructor other than the researcher. The third control section was necessary to have roughly equivalent enrollments for comparison.

Classroom Activities

Although the instructors in the treatment and control group followed the standard syllabus and textbook, there were a few differences in their teaching. For example, some instructors explained this grammatical structured solely in Spanish, whereas

FIGURE 2

Wiki

Heather-y-Cheryl
 ☆ **Los tres cochinitos** Edit This Page page discuss (1) history notify me



El primer cerdo llevaba un sombrero blanco y una camisa negra, el segundo cerdo llevaba un sombrero azul y camisa, el tercer cerdo llevaba azul. Todos los cochinitos cantaron y bailaron mientras ellos construyeron allí casas. **La música era feliz y iba día calor y sol. El cerdo en ropa blanca y negra** cantaba mientras que construía su casa con la paja. La paja era amarilla. Él tocaba un instrumento. El cerdo en ropa azul cantaba mientras que construía su casa con la madera. La madera era marrón. Él tocaba un instrumento. El tercer cerdo en ropa azul con un sombrero blanco. Él construía su casa de ladrillos. Los ladrillos eran rojos y fuertes. Todos los cerdos hicieron sus casas bonitas mientras tocaban música. Los cerdos tocaban música y caminaron al lado de las flores rojas y amarillas. El lobo era grande y negro. Él ve una camisa verde y pantalones rojos. Él tenía hambre. Él asustó dos de los cerdos y de los comió después de ellos. Los cerdos fueron a sus casas. El lobo intentó abrir la puerta de la casa. Hay flores amarillas grandes detrás de él. El lobo destruyó la casa de cerdos. El lobo corrió después del cerdo que usaba la camisa negra. El lobo fingió irse y los dos cerdos bailó y cantó en una manta verde. El lobo se vistió en lanas y fingió ser un niño. Él pegó en la puerta y dos cerdos debajo de la manta verde. Había un vaso azul en la tabla y una silla al lado de la mesa. El lobo gritó en los cerdos y después destruyó la casa. Los cerdos gritaron y entonces comió. Los cerdos eran color de rosa y el lobo era negro. El lobo lastimaba los cerdos y chocó con un árbol. Las manzanas rojas cayeron sobre el lobo. Su cabeza lastimó. Él era enojado. Los dos cerdos comió en la

others used a combination of English and Spanish. Also, the instructor in the treatment group incorporated visual aids such as personal photographs, Google images, and YouTube video clips to help students distinguish between foreground and background. The instructors in the control group relied on the use of the blackboard, their own worksheets, and extra material from the textbook to present these distinctions.

Supplementary Writing Activities

The writing assignments were given as the culminating activity after the instructors in the treatment and control group presented each grammar topic (see Table 1). A total of three supplementary writing assignments (two drafts per assignment) were given to the treatment and control groups as extended practice. Each group took two

to three weeks to complete each assignment. Instructors provided feedback to the students' first version and they were required to submit a revised second version. The instructors in the treatment and control group provided implicit feedback. For instance, they did not correct the students' mistakes but pointed out where the major mistakes were (see Figure 3 for example in the treatment group). The instructors in the control group provided feedback by underlining the words and phrases that were problematic and/or wrote a general comment on the text. It should be noted that before being asked to complete the three assignments related to the preterite and imperfect, the treatment group completed a short assignment in which they were asked to introduce themselves either via a blog or a wiki, so that they would become familiar with the technologies. This introductory

TABLE 1

Summary of the Procedure of the Study

Week	Experimental Group	Control Group
Week 2	Pretests + demographic survey Introduction to the preterite	Pretests + demographic survey Introduction to the preterite
Week 3	Participants signed up for the blog (group A) and the wiki (group B) (Students introduce themselves)	
Week 4	Introduction to the preterite (cont.) writing assignment 1	Introduction to the preterite (cont.) writing assignment 1
Week 6	Imperfect forms of the verbs <i>tener</i> and <i>ser</i> . writing assignment 2	Imperfect forms of the verbs <i>tener</i> and <i>ser</i> . writing assignment 2
Week 11	Present the differences between the preterite and imperfect aspects. writing assignment 3	Present the differences between the preterite and imperfect aspects. writing assignment 3
Week 13	Posttests	Posttests

FIGURE 3

Feedback (See Comments)

MONDAY, APRIL 27, 2009

Pinocho Dos

Gepeto, Jimminy, el gato, y el pez todos prepararon para dormir. Todos estaban muy cansado. Gepeto fume su pipa. El gato abri la ventana. Gepeto miraba a traves de la ventano y reze. Todos estaban dormidos cuando los relojes sone. Los relojes eran muy fuerte. Jimminy se desperte y estaba muy enojado. Entonces, una hada entre la casa. La hada era muy bonita y simpatico. La hada toque Pinocho con su varita magica y el era viviente. La hada instrui Jimminy a guiar y aconsejar Pinocho. Entonces, ella toque Jimminy con su varita magica tambien. Jimminy y Pinocho estaban muy feliz.

POSTED BY MELNICHENKO AT 9:43 AM

1 COMMENTS :

B Daniel Castaneda said...

Good job Ben but I noticed some verbs were not conjugated right. For instance,

1. Gepeto fume su pipa.
2. cuando los relojes sone
3. Jimminy se desperte
4. La hada toque Pinocho
5. La hada instrui
6. ...a guiar y aconsejar Pinocho
7. ella toque Jimminy

TABLE 2

Sample Topics

Treatment (video/photo blogs and wikis)		Control group	
Select one of the videos assigned by your instructor and embed it in your blog/wiki. Watch the video segment twice (take notes while you watch). Use the following chart to organize your essay. Following that, write a coherent story based on this information and post it in your blog/wiki. You are required to use the preterite and imperfect.		Think about something that occurred in the past. It can be a personal experience. Make two lists. The first should contain what happened and the second should contain description. Combine the sentences from the first column with the descriptions in the second column to create a story with logical paragraph.	
Plotline (foreground)	Descriptions (background)	Qué pasó (preterite)	Descripción (imperfect)
Guidelines (wiki group only). Remember that not all the members of your group can post their part of the story at the same time, so you will use a few minutes of class to discuss how each member will proceed with the activity. For instance, you should commit to post on time and write a coherent story. You need to read the previous posting(s) before you proceed to revise or add information.		Note: Supplementary writing assignment provided in the class textbook <i>Claro que sí!</i>	

assignment did not require the use of the target structure.

Writing Assignment Topics

The topics in the treatment and control group were similar in the sense that they were intended to help the students to practice the structure. The principal difference was in the fact that the participants in the control group were not asked to write an essay based on a video or picture (see Table 2). The rationale for using visuals in the essay topics in the treatment group as opposed to the control group was based on the idea that “the narrative tasks may be biased against (early) use of the imperfect, in contrasts to other text types that may require the use of the imperfect” (Bardovi-Harlig, 2005, p. 409). Therefore,

the researcher considered it convenient to implement activities using pictures and videos so that the students could learn these distinctions simultaneously. It should be noted that within the treatment group, the wiki group was provided with specific guideless about how to contribute to this environment because it was the only group in this study writing collaboratively (see guidelines in Table 2).

YouTube Video Clips

The video clips used for the treatment group for supplementary writing activities included Spanish versions of cartoon animations such as *Los Tres Cochinitos* (*The Three Little Pigs*), *Pinocho* (*Pinocchio*), *Scooby Doo*, and *La Caperucita Roja* (*Little Red Riding Hood*). These video clips were

about six to eight minutes long and were selected because they are visually rich animations and students can pay attention to foreground vs. background. Because this was a second-semester Spanish level course, the participants were required to describe what they saw in the animation rather than to write about what they heard in the cartoon dialogues. To make sure the participants described the correct video clip, the instructor posted the complete list of videos, with direct links to YouTube, on the course WebCT/Vista platform for easy access. The participants were given specific instructions on how to embed these clips into their own blog or wiki.

The rationale for incorporating the visual component in classroom activities and supplementary writing activities in the treatment group was because few visuals were used in the textbook and workbook practice activities, such as fill in the blanks. By using pictures and videos in the treatment group, the instructor intended not only that the students understand the connection between foreground (preterite) and background (imperfect) but also that they achieve a balanced knowledge of both grammatical structures. Blyth (2005) underscores the importance of the visual component.

Traditional pedagogical approaches to aspect that rely heavily on cloze passages (fill in the blank texts) without any visual component require students to guess what the narrator must have visualized. Such a pedagogical approach forces students to make guesses about aspectual usage largely based on probability and prototype, which too often reinforces erroneous hypotheses (Blyth, 2005, p. 224).

Results

This study investigated the differences in achievement between instruction that used video/blogs and wikis (treatment) vs. instruction that used traditional text-based technologies (control). While the treatment group combines the use of blogs and wikis, the results will be reported as individual

types of technology to determine which group had a better impact.

Research Question 1: Students' Achievement Level (Production Component)

A one-way between-groups analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was performed to compare achievement levels in learning the preterite and imperfect aspects of students who used instruction with video/photo blogs and wikis vs. those who received instruction with traditional technologies. This statistical method reduced the error variance by controlling the effects of the participants' previous knowledge (covariate). In this study, the independent variable was the type of intervention (instruction that used blogs and wikis), and the dependant variable was the postscores of the participants. The participants' pre-scores were used as the covariate for this analysis. The means posttests scores with (95%) confidence intervals for students in the treatment and control group were as follows: for the bloggers $M = 13.56$ [9.76, 17.36], for the students who used wiki, $M = 11.52$ [9.07, 13.98], and for the control group $M = 9.12$ [6.57, 11.67]. The analysis revealed that there is no significant relationship between the covariate and the dependent variable $F(1,39) = 2.9$, $p = .09$. After adjusting for preintervention scores, there were no significant differences between the treatment and control group at the production level $F(1,39) = 2.07$, $p = .14$ partial eta squared $\eta^2 = .096$. This finding suggests that instruction which utilizes video/photo blogs and wikis has no significant effect on the students' achievement at the production (written) level (see Table 3).

In order to avoid grading bias, the researcher asked two experienced instructors from the control group (interraters) to grade a random sample of the production part of seven students' pre- and posttests (14 essays per interrater in total). Cronbach's alpha values show an interrater reliability of .627 for the pretest and .642 for the posttest.

TABLE 3

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects (N = 43)

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected model	253.600 ^a	3	84.533	3.194	.034	.197
Intercept	550.289	1	550.289	20.790	.000	.348
pro_pre	78.483	1	78.483	2.965	.093	.071
wikiblogcontrol	109.769	2	54.885	2.074	.139	.096
Error	1032.307	39	26.469			
Total	6445.000	43				
Corrected total	1285.907	42				

^aR squared = .197 (adjusted R-squared = .135).
 Dependent variable: Respondent's post_score_production_component.

TABLE 4

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects (N = 64)

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected model	208.668 ^a	3	69.556	3.880	.013	.162
Intercept	1,064.508	1	1,064.508	59.387	.000	.497
pre_rec_mean	58.617	1	58.617	3.270	.076	.052
wikiblogcontrol	134.377	2	67.189	3.748	.029	.111
Error	1,075.488	60	17.925			
Total	15,549.472	64				
Corrected total	1,284.156	63				

^aR squared = .162 (adjusted R squared = .121).
 Dependent variable: post_rec_mean_recognition_component.

Research Question 2: Students' Achievement Level (Recognition Component)

A one-way ANCOVA was also conducted to compare the achievement levels of learning the preterite and imperfect aspects in Spanish between the two groups at the recognition level. For that purpose, the means of all the pre- and posttests of the recognition component were computed. The means

posttests scores with 95% confidence intervals for students in the control and treatment groups were as follows: for the bloggers $M = 18.28$ [15.60, 20.96], for the students who used wiki $M = 14.59$ [12.64, 16.53], and for the control group $M = 14.158$ [12.72, 15.59]. The analysis reveals that there is no significant relationship between the covariate and the dependent variable $F(1,60) = 3.3, p = .08$. However, after adjusting for preintervention scores,

the results revealed that there were statistical significances between the treatment and the control group $F(1,60) = 3.75, p = .03$, partial eta squared $\eta^2 = .11$. This finding lends support to the notion that instruction that uses video/photo blogs and wikis technologies had significant effects on students' achievement at the recognition (reading) level (see Table 4).

In addition to performing an ANCOVA to the means of all pre- and posttests of the recognition component, separate ANCOVAs were performed on each of these tests. The results of the analysis for the first post-score test $F(1,48) = 1.5, p = .24$, partial eta squared $\eta^2 = .06$ and for the second post-score test $F(1,45) = 1.2, p = .31$, partial eta squared $\eta^2 = .05$ showed no statistical significance between the treatment and the control group. However, the results of the analysis for the third postscore test $F(1,45) = 4.7, p = .01$, partial eta squared $\eta^2 = .17$ showed that there were significant differences between the treatment and control groups.

Postscore Means (Recognition and Production Components)

When looking at the postrecognition means of each test of the recognition component, the treatment group (blog and wiki) means were higher than those of the control group. More specifically, for test 1, the blog ($M = 17.59, SD = 1.83$) and wiki ($M = 14.31, SD = 1.36$) group means were higher than that of the control group ($M = 13.94, SD = 1.18$). For test 2, the blog ($M = 12.92, SD = 1.13$) and the wiki ($M = 11.36, SD = 0.85$) group means were also higher than that of the control group ($M = 10.87, SD = 0.69$). For test 3, the blog ($M = 23.97, SD = 1.37$) and the wiki ($M = 20.53, SD = 1.02$) means were higher than that of the control group ($M = 19.04, SD = 0.84$). At the production level, the blog ($M = 13.56, SD = 1.88$) and the wiki ($M = 11.52, SD = 1.21$) group means were higher than that of the control group ($M = 9.12, SD = 1.26$) as well.

These postscore means suggest that, overall, the participants who were exposed to instruction that used video/photo blog and wiki technologies performed better than those who used instruction with traditional technologies. Within the treatment group, the bloggers performed better than the wiki users.

Discussion

Students' Achievement (Recognition and Production Components)

These results suggest that instruction that uses video/photo blogs and wikis in lower-level courses does not influence students' achievement score at the production level. However, instruction that uses video/photo blogs and wikis might influence the students' achievement score at the recognition level. These results more likely correspond with the ACTFL Writing Proficiency Guidelines Standards (Revised 2001), which state, "Writers at the Intermediate-low level are able to meet some limited practical writing needs. They can create statements and formulate questions based on familiar material. ... They are written mostly in present time with occasional and often incorrect use of the past or future time" (p. 5). These results are plausible in the sense that students, in the second semester of college Spanish, are not expected to produce (write) or master the preterite and imperfect aspects but at least to be able to recognize (read) the differences. In addition, the results also show that at this level of study, it is possible to learn the distinctions of both structures at the same time rather than emphasizing these differences at a later level. That is, classroom instructors should consider taking the students, especially in the second semester of college Spanish, one step further to what is considered the default marker of past at lower level courses, the preterite (Salaberry, 1999, 2000b, 2003). Blyth (2005) highlights the importance of dealing with this structure at this level of learning.

In the beginning stage (corresponding roughly to the first year of most college

students), it seems reasonable that the goal of instruction should be to help learners overcome the past default marker, and to acquire the prototypical uses of both the preterite and imperfect (Blyth, 2005, p. 221).

Furthermore, these results suggest that instruction that used video/photo blogs and wikis can facilitate the learning of aspectual distinctions in Spanish. That is, the combination of traditional instruction, CMC text-based technologies, YouTube videos, and Google images (visual input) were of crucial importance in this study. It seems like these technologies provide a rich foreground/background context and a learning framework that prompt elicitation cues, allowing the students to recognize aspect distinctions and generate sentences in the target structure.

Another particular contribution of the video/photo blogs and wikis is that they facilitated extended linguistic exposure to the learning of the preterite and imperfect contrast. Moreover, these technologies seem to be appropriate tools to implement these types of extended classroom activities without sacrificing classroom time and the budgets of students and schools.

It should be noted that it is possible to conduct this activity with other technologies such as PowerPoint presentation or word processing software with links to videos (or access to DVDs) that students can watch outside the classroom. However, these tools can prove tedious for instructors and students given their more limited web-based capabilities. That is, senders and recipients may need to use their local computer to save, attach, and upload or send their work to a course management system (e.g., Blackboard/Vista) or via e-mail. In addition, these technologies use memory and hard disk space and need upgrades.

Among all the participants in this study, those who used instruction with video/photo blogs and wikis seem to have performed better than the participants who used instruction with traditional technologies at the production and recognition level,

as evidenced in the postscore means. Of further interest are the more favorable scores' means among students using blogs. Further research can examine these differences. In addition, there are many factors not considered in this research study that may have impacted the participants' achievement scores. For instance, the participants might have been sensitive to the work dynamics during the learning process of the structure (individual work vs. group work) or the type of text provided in each test (personal vs. fictional narratives) (Salaberry, 2003). The teaching style of each instructor might have also impacted these results. Furthermore, the students may have been sensitive to their points of view of what they perceived as foreground vs. background. "Different people may view the same events from different perspectives and capture the different perspectives by using either the preterite or imperfect" (Frantzen, 1995). Participants can use rules that they make for themselves (Liskin-Gasparro, 2000), or a story could be retold using the present tense (Salaberry, 1999, p. 169).

In sum, while instruction that used video/photo blog and wikis contributed to these results, we do not know exactly which other factor(s) may have had the largest impact at this time. A future study may explain this.

Limitations

The results of this study are narrowed by some limitations. First, this study has low statistical power due to the small sample size and missing information. Also, the subjects in each of the two treatment sections were not randomly assigned. In addition, the teaching styles, extra visual component, novelty effect, and mortality (loss of participants) may have affected these results as well. While there may be other factors that may have impacted the participant's achievement, the key limitations were sample size, mortality, and some missing information, such as students who did not complete their essays (production).

Conclusions and Recommendations for Further Research

The results of this study suggest that instruction that uses video/photo blogs and wikis may facilitate the teaching and learning process of one of the most difficult structures to learn by native speakers of English. In this study, the combination of traditional classroom instruction, enhanced with text and visual technologies, appeared to have facilitated the learning of the target structure and provided a rich virtual environment in which the students could visualize and understand the differences between the preterite and imperfect aspects from the discourse perspective. In this sense, these technologies were the means by which the students performed better (at the recognition level) than their peers using traditional technologies with the target structure.

Because today's learners are technologically oriented, L2 professionals are encouraged to incorporate into their daily instruction widely available blog and wiki technologies which could be used for a variety of language learning purposes. They are simple to use; connect instructors and learners, via the Web, outside the classroom; and they are cost effective.

Further longitudinal research using instruction with blogs or wikis to learn the preterite and imperfect aspects should be conducted at higher levels or in upper-division courses of Spanish. It is at this level where students tend to produce (write) longer narratives and have a better understanding of such structures. In addition, further studies should explore other types of potential input these technologies may facilitate, such as the oral input heard in the video dialogues and the written input from other peers (i.e., collaborative writing in a wiki group). Instruction that uses blogs and wikis should also be explored to enhance the narrative of other structures that are problematic, such as the Spanish subjunctive. As the interface and new features enhance these particular technologies,

other technologies, such as Google Docs (which can be used like a wiki), should be incorporated into the instructional sequence in order to help the students learn this structure effectively and become more proficient with narration.

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APPENDIX A

Pre- and Posttest (Recognition Component)

Please watch the video clip and then select the best option according to the context. You will have 6 minutes to complete the task. You will be told when 2 minutes are left.

En el video (hubo, había) tres osos que (vivieron, vivían) en una casita bonita en el bosque. Se (llamaron, llamaban) Papá Oso, Mamá Osa, y Pequeño Osito. Papá Oso (fue, era) bajo, gordo y feo. (Tuvo, Tenía) pelo marrón oscuro y siempre (estuvo, estaba) de mal humor. Mamá Osa (fue, era) agradable y no (habló, hablaba) mucho. Siempre (llevó, llevaba) un vestido y un gorro de dormir. El Pequeño Osito (fue, era) un bebé grande y siempre (llevó, llevaba) un pañal.

Una mañana mientras ellos (desayunaron, desayunaban), el Pequeño Osito (comió, comía) toda la miel y el papá lo (golpeó, golpeaba) y el Osito (lloró, lloraba). Luego el papá (salió, salía) de la cocina con el bebé para buscar más miel. (Encontraron, encontraban) una colmena en un árbol que (estuvo, estaba) cerca de la casita. El árbol (fue, era) muy alto y delgado y la colmena (fue, era) grande. Ellos (intentaron, intentaban) diferentes maneras para obtener la miel de la colmena. Primero, el papá (utilizó, utilizaba) una escalera, (saltó, saltaba) desde un balancín y (cargó, cargaba) a la mamá y al bebé sobre sus hombros. Después, (caminó, caminaba) sobre una cuerda y finalmente (subió, subía) al árbol con zapatos especiales. Papá Oso (fracasó, fracasaba) en todos sus intentos y al final (lloró, lloraba) de frustración porque (descubrió, descubría) que Mamá Osa (tuvo, tenía) mucha miel en la despensa.

Source:

Adapted from Marianne Cosentino and Krystal Thane

<http://cuenta.wikispaces.com/FINAL+DRAFT>

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